Panenská oddanost

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/64917118.

Rating:
Mature

Archive Warning:
Major Character Death

Category:
F/F

Fandom:
Bloodborne (Video Game)

Relationships:
The Hunter/Plain Doll (Bloodborne), Plain Doll (Bloodborne)/Reader

Characters:
Female Hunter (Bloodborne), Plain Doll (Bloodborne), Reader

Additional Tags:
doll - Freeform, hand kissing, dismantling, Cleaning, Repair, Canon Related, Dress Up, Developing Relationship, Holding Hands, Walking, Muteness, Talking, Hair Braiding, Sewing, Fluff, Medical, Corpses, Waiting, Loneliness, Stitches

Language:
English

Stats:
Published: 2025-04-22 Words: 4,775 Chapters: 2/2

Panenská oddanost

by Bordementions

Summary

> The Dream has no doors, and yet you return through one every time. Is it not strange? That death leads you here, and never asks why. That something cradles you beyond the veil, whispering, "Again."

Notes

> I like the plain doll tee hee
>
> Might be a couple more souls fics in the future

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1: Dziewczyna

The dull, calm landscape greets you like it always does—quiet, eternal, bathed in a pale mist that clings to the air like a held breath relinquished into the cold. The faint rustling of flowers, the shimmer of soft candlelight on gravestones, the whisper of distant bells—nothing has changed. And yet, everything in you feels heavier than when you last stepped through the veil.

Your boots crunch lightly against the stone path as you ascend the circular walkway. Blood still clings to your coat. Limbs still ache from the hunt. There's the scent of wet iron lingering in your nose. But none of it matters, not now. Not here. Not within the confines of the dream.

She is there again, the same as always. Virtually unchanged from the first time the sharp nails of death had delivered you crumpled at her feet.

The Doll stands amidst the white flowers just below the cathedral's slope, her back to you, bonnet slightly tilted with the wind, still and calm as a painting. But no longer is she a statue to you.

She turns as your steps approach.

"Ah… Good hunter. You have returned. I had begun to worry, though I knew, in my stillness, that you would find your way back… You always do."

You say nothing. You only tilt your head slightly, to form a familiar motion—acknowledgment. Relief. Her eyes soften at it, hands folded politely at her waist, but her gaze lingers on you, it tends to do that as of late you've noted.

"You carry the scent of distant blood. Cold places. Terrible things. But never has your presence been one of detestation, it soothes me still."

You lower yourself to the soft grass beside her, your coat folding around you to envelop into a puddle. The candlelight paints her face in warm amber hues, makes her porcelain cheeks seem flushed for a moment. And then, your gloved fingers reach out—not to touch her just yet, but to gently take a lock of her pale flaxen hair.

She does not more then acknowledge your gentle cradling, but let you

continue without interruption.

"Would you… braid it again, good hunter? I have come to cherish this routine of ours. Even the silence between us speaks more kindly than many of the voices I have had to accompany this dream."

You begin, wordlessly. Her hair is impossibly fine, yet heavy, like threads of spun silk. Your fingers work slowly, carefully—half in ritual, fully of affection. The strands catch the firelight and gleam like pale moonlight. You don't hurry. For there never is a reason to with her; for there is not a soul to disturb the shared dreamers.

She speaks as you work.

"There was a time, I think, when I sat here unmoving… untouched… only waiting to be seen. And now—" her voice drops, a hush among hushed things, "—now I feel the wind more acutely. I feel your gaze, as though it carries weight, as though it remembers me when I forget myself."

As you reach to gather more of her hair, your fingers brush against something at her shoulder—a faint unevenness beneath the cloth of her shawl. You pause, causing her to tilt her head towards you.

"…Is something wrong?"

You gently brush back the edge of her shawl, folding it aside like one might lift the edge of a crumbling, waterlogged book. The dark wool is heavy, with intricate patterns worn down in places. Beneath, on the porcelain curve of her collarbone, you see a faint crack—hairline, spidering out in gentle, sad geometry.

Your expression must shift, just enough, because she offers a soft murmur in turn.

"Ah… That. It must have happened while you were away. A fall, perhaps. I do not remember. Sometimes I feel things that do not stay with me."

You nod once, solemnly. Then your eyes scan lower, more carefully. You begin to notice more: a loose seam at the hem of her petticoat. A chip at the knuckle of her left hand. The stitching of one glove torn, the button of her boot nearly missing. Nothing severe. Nothing ruinous. But the sight pulls your brows together. It does not kindness to you seeing her like this, seeing even the dreamscape being unkind to those who tend it.

She watches you with a strange stillness, as though embarrassed by the attention.

"…Do I appear unsightly, now?" she asks softly.

You look up sharply, shake your head. A firm ‘no’, even without the words. Your fingers trace just below the crack at her shoulder, never touching it directly. As if your concern alone could mend it.

"I see," she says, eyes flickering closed for a moment. "You are kind to me, always. Even when I fear I am no longer… useful. This body is fragile, you see. Gehrman did not craft me for eternity. Only for waiting."

You stand slowly, nodding toward the cathedral at the top of the slope. She follows your gesture.

"…Yes. The tools are there. You’ve used them before, haven’t you? When I lost the button on my sleeve. You mended it so carefully I nearly forgot it had ever come loose."

She rises, dress shifting gently as she does. The flowers don’t seem to part for her, they simply accept her steps. You walk beside her, side by side, wordless save for the soft whisper of the wind and her voice, woven like a spell between the gravestones.

"When you look at me that way, I wonder if it is not memory that brings you back… but love. Or perhaps a longing you cannot name. I feel it, even if you do not speak."

As the two of you ascend toward the warmth of the path's glow, she reaches for your hand—not tightly, not urgently. Merely placing her fingers over yours, as if to say: I am still here. I am still whole. But if I break, let it be by your hands alone, who would piece me back together.

The climb is gentle, a spiral of stone and silence winding toward the top of the hill. Your hand is in hers—small and smooth and warm in your grasp despite the porcelain—and you match her pace exactly, step for step. There’s a comfort in her gait, in how she glances up at you now and again as though confirming this is not a dream within the dream. That you are truly here.

The mists are thinner this high up. The air more still.

"Do you know," she says softly, her voice like velvet pressed between pages, "when I walk with you like this… I feel almost as though I'm dreaming too. But not like the Dream I was made for. Something gentler, something else."

You squeeze her fingers. A small motion, but her smile responds to it instantly, subdued but radiant. The white lilies tremble in the still air as you pass, soft petals brushing your boots and the hem of her dress.

"I often wonder… what the world outside must be like now. You return with frost on your coat, or mud on your boots, and I can tell what season it must be. What path you've taken. And I think: I've never seen a forest. Never felt a bonfire."

She looks down, eyes half-lidded as if ashamed of wanting. Her bonnet's ribbon flutters gently in the wind.

"…But then you return. And that is all I need to feel I have touched such things."

The doors of the church loom just ahead—dark, old wood worn smooth by time and weather. You step forward first and push them open. They creak softly, the scent of oil, paper, and old wood spilling out to greet you. Familiar despite the infrequent visits, such a unique smell.

Inside, the workshop breathes like an old heart. Dust hangs thick in the slant of candlelight streaming in from high, narrow windows. Tables are cluttered with tools, coils of wire, tiny drawers full of pins and gears. Bolts of cloth. Wooden mannequins with empty sockets. The scent of beeswax polish and timeworn leather clings to everything. No one has swept in ages. No one dares to disturb what remains.

You turn to her, guiding her gently to a well-worn cushioned seat near one of the side worktables. She lowers herself gracefully, folding her hands in her lap, watching you with a patient, knowing gaze.

"This place is… familiar. A second home during the initial weeks of my creation," she murmurs, shifting slightly so her skirts settle neatly around her. "Though Gerhman hardly has the means to spend such time now."

You kneel before her. With utmost care, your hands reach up to the edge of her shawl once more, beginning to lift it from her shoulders. Her eyes do not leave yours.

"May I?" she asks, almost in a whisper. "Speak, I mean. While you look after me."

You nod.

"Thank you," she breathes, voice light, almost reverent.

You work slowly, methodically. You undo the tiny clasps along the edge of her shawl. Fold it neatly. Then her gloves, the soft leather peeled away finger by finger. You notice the chip again on her knuckle—marking it in your mind for later. Her outer coat next, the dark velvet sliding away to reveal the corseted bodice beneath. The buttons are tiny, old-fashioned. Familiar now. Your hands know them.

She continues to speak while you unfasten each one.

"When I am alone, I think often about names. Did I have one, before this? Am I meant to be something more than an imitation?"

Her voice is not sad, only thoughtful, dreamlike.

"But I like the names you give me, even without saying them aloud. I see them in your hands. In the way you look at me. ‘□□□□□□□,’ I think, is one of them."

You've peeled away the outer layers now, revealing the porcelain beneath. Her arms, her shoulders, her chest. Smooth, pale, luminous. There are faint lines—some old repairs you'd done long ago, hidden beneath clothing and gentle shadows. You trace one now with your thumb. Her breath catches slightly. You look up, meeting her eyes.

"I'm sorry," she says softly, "I didn't mean to fidget. It's just… when you touch me like that, I feel something. A warmth. Like I might weep, if I knew how."

You give her a faint, fond look. A softening at the eyes. Then continue, checking the joint at her elbow, testing the articulation. She's held together by delicate pins and gears, subtle mechanisms of impossible craftsmanship. You note where some have come slightly loose. A lock of hair slips from her braid and falls across her cheek.

"…May I ask something?" she says again. "Do you… ever wonder what I dream of?"

You pause, nod for her to continue.

"I dream of waking. Of walking. Of braiding hair in the sunlight. Of sitting alight in a world with no beasts. No blood. Just the sound of wind, and silence beside me. Your silence."

You find another crack, this one small, along her side where the bodice had pressed tightly. A stress fracture. You brush it with a cloth and mark it, eyes narrowing. She watches your focus, your care, like a sacred thing.

"You treat me as though I am precious," she murmurs. "Not because I am fragile, but because you choose to. That… makes me feel more human than anything else."

You finish your inspection slowly, the lamplight flickering gently overhead. The faint ticking of an old clock echoes somewhere in the rafters. Her porcelain skin gleams softly where the fabric has been drawn away. Her body, though artificial, bears the wear of years. The quiet pride of something beloved enough to be worn down.

She looks at you, bare in a way that isn't shameful, only intimate. Known.

"Thank you," she whispers, hands folded again. "For seeing me. For still wanting to look."

The Doll sits in stillness, poised and elegant, even as you begin the slow and deliberate process of taking her apart.

You work from the arms first, because the joints there are most exposed. Your gloved fingers find the hidden seam at the base of her shoulder, your thumb brushing across the delicate porcelain curve before carefully turning the hidden latch. A faint click echoes in the still air of the Workshop. You brace her arm with one hand while gently sliding the joint free with the other, cradling the limb as though it were a newborn.

She watches you with that same gentle serenity. There is no fear in her expression. No pain. Only trust.

"Have I ever told you," she says, voice light and curious, "that I sometimes imagine what it would be like to play an instrument? The violin, perhaps. Something mournful."

You shake your head with a small smile as you set her arm down on a folded cloth. One by one, you dismantle her other arm, then carefully begin to unseat the chest plate of her torso—disengaging tiny brass

clasps hidden beneath the lining of her bodice. You note each worn connector, each tiny scratch in the pale inner workings. Her inner frame gleams faintly beneath the light, full of gears and joints and threads of silver cabling like nerves.

"Would it be difficult to learn, do you think?" she continues, conversational. "With these hands? I suppose I would need to be repaired first. But I dream of sound. I would like to make some of my own."

Her body is soon disassembled down to its central components: arms, torso, hips, legs, each laid out on thick cloths you've laid across a long workbench. Every joint you remove is examined carefully. Repaired if needed. You move slowly—not from uncertainty, but from reverence. The space between motions is filled with small sounds: the clink of tools, the soft creak of the bench, her steady, warm voice.

"Once, while you were away," she says, "a moth found its way into the dream. It landed on the gravestone where you always return. It stayed there for hours. Do you think it was real? Or just something borrowed from your memory?"

You pause, look up at her. Her head rests on a plush cushion across from where you work. Her face remains expressive, eyes following your movements with quiet affection.

You raise your brows in a question: Do you think it was real?

"I like to think so," she replies with a soft smile. "I named it. Gwendolyn."

You chuckle silently, then turn your attention to her leg joints. One has a stiff rotation. You take it apart more deeply—unscrewing the brass socket and removing a sliver of grime that has built up around the pin. You clean it with a tiny metal file and oil it lightly with a drop of the fragrant machine oil she's come to associate with your touch. You work carefully, dusting with a horsehair brush, wiping with cloths soaked in distilled water, and inspecting each cavity and screw for damage.

One of her toes had a chip you hadn't noticed before. You set it aside, jot down a note. Later, you'll check the drawer of spare parts kept high in the workshop's shelves.

"Why do you think the Dream takes this shape?" she asks you after a moment. "Why a garden, a chapel, and a workshop? Why

gravestones?"

You glance at her again, thoughtful. Then you shrug, raising a hand and mimicking the gesture of a heartbeat. Life. Death. Rebirth. It's all part of the cycle.

"Ah," she says. "Of course. And you… you are the one who walks that cycle over and over."

With her main frame fully separated now, you place a small padded board beside her head and set out each part like pieces of a cherished instrument—every limb aligned, screws kept in neat rows, joints protected beneath oiled linen. The inner clockwork core that sits behind her chest plating ticks faintly—a mechanical heartbeat that powers her voice and the motions of her face. It remains intact, and you leave it so.

You walk quietly around the workshop, moving from cabinet to shelf. You take your time gathering everything: a new fine-file brush, narrow tongs, stitching thread the color of old cream, replacement clasps. You find an unlabeled drawer of pristine porcelain toes—each one hand-crafted, sealed in waxed paper. You hold a few up for her to see.

"That one," she says, smiling gently as she points with her eyes. "The shape is delicate. I think it will suit me."

Back at the workbench, you begin repairs in earnest. Every movement is measured. The cracked shoulder piece is lightly sanded and filled with a porcelain resin, blended to match the hue of her skin. You use a magnifying lens for the finer details. When the toe is replaced, you test the joint's motion yourself, running your fingers across it to check for snag or catch. Smooth.

"I've always wanted to know more about the stars," she says while you polish the inner hinges of her left leg. "But I can't see them here. Not even in dreams."

You glance up at her, tilt your head slightly, and mime a telescope.

"Oh? You would show me?" she asks with a hint of delighted laughter. "That sounds lovely."

Once the body is repaired, cleaned, and thoroughly rechecked, you begin the reassembly. Piece by piece, her form is reconstructed, now gleaming and whole. You take her hands last. The tiny bones and

joints inside, fine wire tendon equivalents—you check them again and again before securing the plates.

"Does this… make me new?" she asks softly, eyes never leaving yours.

You pause, thinking. Then you gently shake your head. You reach out and place your hand over her chest, over where her heart might be.

Not new. Whole.

She smiles, and for a long moment, there is only silence.

And in that still, golden hush, you finish placing the last piece in place.

The repairs are complete, but your work is not yet finished.

The Doll sits beside you now, legs folded beneath her, hands resting neatly in her lap—delicate and serene as always, but with a spark of curiosity in her gaze. Her body, newly restored, moves with silent ease, every joint repaired, each piece polished to a gentle luster. The firelight in the workshop flickers low, casting warm amber shadows over the cluttered tables, half-open drawers, and the worn old floor where scattered threads and broken needles lie like fallen leaves.

You thread the needle with practiced hands, drawing a fine, sturdy thread through a torn hem of her bodice. The fabric, once fine and tailored, is frayed at the edges, patched already in several places from prior hunts and long stretches of time. There are small tears at the shoulder seams, loose threads trailing like cobwebs.

*The Doll watches closely. "You use such tiny movements," she murmurs, eyes following each stitch. "Like weaving a spell."

You glance sideways at her with a faint, amused smile. Then, slowly, you place the needle in her hand.

She blinks. "Oh. I… may I?"

You nod and gently adjust the cloth in her lap, helping her orient the edge of the hem. Her porcelain fingers tremble ever so slightly—not from weakness, but from unfamiliarity. You guide her hand with yours at first, showing her how to pierce the fabric and draw the thread through in one smooth pull.

"I feel clumsy," she says softly, lips curled in a rueful smile. "It's strange. I never imagined I could be clumsy."

You tilt your head, gently nudge her elbow to adjust her angle, then press your fingers to your chest. Everyone starts somewhere. Even you.

The Doll breathes out a soft, delighted laugh. "Then I will learn. If it means I may sew beside you , I will learn everything."

Together, you sit in the quiet warmth of the workshop, surrounded by half-empty spools and soft folded fabrics. The two of you mend each garment in turn: the hem of her bodice, the torn cuff of her sleeve, the frayed edges of her skirt. You patch holes with worn linen you find in the workshop cabinets, matching colors as best you can—soft ash grey, faded ivory, a whisper of dusky lavender.

You work in tandem: she sewing slowly with careful hands, you moving beside her in practiced rhythm, occasionally guiding her needle or threading it anew when her fingers falter. Every stitch you place is done with reverence. Every thread pulled tight is a promise of care.

Eventually, you begin redressing her. You help her into her repaired skirt first, smoothing it down with a patient hand, then lift the bodice over her shoulders, fastening it snugly at the back. You tie the sash around her waist with practiced grace, tucking the knot just so. Her sleeves come next, and then her shawl, soft with age but clean and whole once more.

Her gloves are last. You take one delicate hand in yours, sliding the glove up slowly, easing each finger into its place. As you pull the edge of the glove over her wrist, you pause. Then, gently, you turn her hand over and press a kiss to her porcelain palm.

Her fingers curl softly. Her expression glows like a candle newly lit.

She does not speak. She does not need to.

You walk with her out of the workshop. The door creaks softly as you open it, letting in the hush of the dream. The white mist below the floating island remains ever-still. The lilies sway in silence. Candles burn beside grave markers that shimmer faintly in the eternal twilight.

You descend the stone path slowly together. She walks beside you for a time, her gloved hand in yours. When you near the bottom, she

slows her steps. The place where she always stands awaits her—just before the largest gravestone, encircled by white flowers. A familiar spot. A sacred one.

She turns to you, both hands folded before her now.

"I shall wait for you, as always," she says, voice as calm as a lullaby. "Return to me safe."

You raise your hand briefly in farewell. A quiet nod. Then you turn, stepping toward the stone. Toward waking. The world shifts behind your eyes.

And her voice follows you like a bell rung gently in fog.

"Farewell, good Hunter. May you find your worth in the waking world."

There are doors in the dream no one speaks of.

Not because they are forgotten, but because they are listening. One opens when you sleep too long.

Another, when you die too kindly.

Chapter 2: Złamany

You lie still, as always. So very still.

But that is all right.

You are tired, of course you are.

The Hunt has been long and cruel, and you—Good Hunter—have given so much of yourself to it.

The Doll hums softly as she moves through the white-flowered garden, cradling you in her arms with reverent care. Your arms dangle gently across her shoulders, your head resting beneath her chin. She does not seem to notice your weight, nor the way your limbs sway without resistance. The strength within her is quiet but steadfast, born not of blood or muscle, but of purpose.

"There, there now," she coos, her voice a low melody, "You always come back to me this way. So pale. So quiet. The dream will mend you."

She carries you to the old wooden bench by the gravestones—the same one where you used to sit together, side by side—and lays you down across it with the tenderness one might show a fragile relic. The white lilies press against your boots, swaying gently in the breeze.

She kneels beside you, hands gentle as she begins the process of cleaning you. Your coat is splattered again—deep red, nearly black, across the front. She tuts softly.

"Oh, good hunter. Always such a mess, aren't you?" she says, dipping a soft cloth into the basin of water she's brought and gently wiping along your jawline. "Did you fight terribly this time? Were they cruel to you?"

She smiles, small and wistful. "Yes… yes, of course they were. They always are, aren't they? But you prevailed, as you always do."

She lifts your hand, folding back the torn glove, revealing a small mark on the skin. Her fingertips trace the deep gash along your forearm. A sewing needle is produced from her pouch, threaded and ready, and she begins the careful work of stitching your flesh closed.

"I told you before… I used to watch the messengers do this," she muses. "They're clumsy, you know. They don't understand how delicate you are. But I have learned. I've practiced, just for you."

Your body twitches slightly beneath the needle, a natural reflex. She freezes, then beams softly.

"Oh, you are still in there… I knew you would be."

She wraps the wound when the stitches are done, the linen snug and clean. Her hands never shake.

A moment later, she is seated behind you on the bench, lifting your head to rest it in her lap. Her fingers glide through your hair, smoothing it gently, beginning to braid it with quiet focus.

"You have such lovely hair," she murmurs. "It grows so fast. Do you remember when I first started braiding it for you? You blushed then. I thought that was sweet." A pause. "No? You don't remember?" Her tone is teasing. "You always were so forgetful."

She leans down, her lips brushing your temple in a soft ghost of a kiss.

"But I remember everything."

As the braid continues, she talks to you the way she always does, her voice soft and unhurried.

"The dream has changed since you came here. At first, it was only silence and mist… But now, there is warmth. Do you feel it too? I think you do." She brushes a stray lock from your face. "The waking world is so far away now. Do you ever think about going back?"

You remain still. The Doll tilts her head as though listening intently.

"…Ah. I see. You'd rather stay. Yes, I understand. This place is kind to us, in its own way."

She lifts your hand and presses it to her cheek.

"I am happiest here, when you are near. I no longer mind the stillness."

Later, she changes your clothing with solemn focus, unfastening each button with practiced grace, peeling back the bloodied fabric and replacing it with freshly laundered garments she has laid out on the workbench earlier that day. She hums a lullaby as she does it,

unaware or uncaring of the stiffness in your limbs, the absence of breath. Or perhaps—she notices. Perhaps she has noticed many times.

She buttons your shirt with trembling care and adjusts the coat across your shoulders. She even ties your scarf, the way you used to do it, mimicking the knot you always preferred.

"There," she whispers, stepping back to admire her work. "As pretty as ever, good hunter."

The sun never rises here. But she acts as though it has, as if the day has passed in gentle routine. She brings you a wooden spoon of soup she's left to warm by candlelight, and when your mouth does not open, she nods softly and sets the bowl aside.

"You're too tired to eat. That's all right."

As the lilies glow faintly in the distance, she returns to your side and lies beside you on the bench, folding your hand into hers.

"You told me once… that if anything ever happened to you, I should continue on. Do you remember?"

She waits, as though you might nod.

"But I cannot. Not without you. So… I will wait. Until you wake again. You always do."

She smiles then, dreamily, her head resting against your shoulder.

"And if you never wake… that is fine too. I have your company. And you have mine. That is enough."

Her fingers move again, stroking your cheek with infinite tenderness. Her gaze, distant yet full of purpose, never wavers.

"That is the purpose of the dream after all, to guide you when you fall."

And for the rest of the endless evening, she sits in silence beside you, her smile serene, her voice long quieted—save for the occasional murmur of your name, her "good hunter," because you would respond to her wouldn't you?

For there is no lesser cruelty than solace in the one shown to love.

End Notes

https://discord.gg/GPBNYYxExz

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